



7th/February/2023

The Minister,
Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD),
Kampala (U).

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR COPY OF REPORT FROM THE BUGOMA FOREST BOUNDARY RE-OPENING EXERCISE

Greetings from the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC), a coalition of civil society organisations (CSOs) and private sector players whose main objective is to save Bugoma forest from oil, land grabbing and sugarcane threats.

The SBFC, whose members have worked since 2016 to defend Bugoma forest from destruction, takes this opportunity to thank you and your ministry for the work you are doing to promote good land governance in Uganda.

We also appreciate the work that you and your ministry are doing to ensure that Uganda's forests are protected from land grabbing pressures. Particularly, the SBFC appreciates you for listening to our calls to re-open the Bugoma forest boundaries to protect the forest from land grabbing threats.

The forest's boundaries were re-opened in August 2022 following stalled attempts in December 2021 and March 2022. Today, the Ministry of Lands is yet to share the report from the boundary opening exercise with the public yet several claims over the forest land remain, putting the forest at further risk of degradation.

Through this letter therefore, the SBFC is requesting **the Ministry of Lands to publicly share a copy of the report from the Bugoma forest boundary re-opening exercise of November 2021 to August 2022.** A copy of the report should be shared with the SBFC through the campaign's chairperson and with the general public through the media.

This request is premised on citizens' right to receive information in the hands of the state as provided for under Article 41 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution. The request is also based on several commitments made by the Ministry of Lands to the SBFC following various engagements between the two parties.

HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT

As you may recall, the SBFC has severally engaged the Ministry of Lands and other key stakeholders including the President of Uganda, the Speaker of Parliament, the European Union Delegation in Uganda as well as other development partners and stakeholders for re-opening of the Bugoma forest boundaries.

On February 3, 2021, the SBFC participated in a meeting in Kampala with Ministry of Lands officials including Mr. E.W Ogara, the Commissioner for Surveys and Mapping, Mr. Henry Opio Ogenyi, an Assistant Commissioner, and Mr. John Vianney Lutaaya, the lead surveyor for the Bugoma forest boundary opening exercise.

During the meeting in which the SBFC requested the Ministry of Lands to open the Bugoma forest boundaries with the SBFC and other stakeholders' participation, the Ministry of Lands committed to re-open the Bugoma forest boundaries in 2021. Further, the Ministry of Lands committed to involve the SBFC, Uganda Law Society (ULS), Inter-religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) and the Institution of Surveyors Uganda (ISU) in the boundary re-opening exercise.

By October 2021, the ministry was yet to re-open the forest boundaries prompting the SBFC including local communities to request for a meeting with the Minister of Lands, Hon. Judith Nabakooba. The meeting was held on October 29, 2021 and the minister was represented by Mr. Richard Jjuko, the undersecretary of the MLHUD. Other MLHUD officials at the meeting included Mr. Henry Opio Ogenyi, an Acting Commissioner, and others.

During the meeting, the MLHUD informed the SBFC that the ministry and National Forestry Authority (NFA) would begin the Bugoma forest boundary re-opening exercise on November 2, 2021. The ministry also reiterated its commitment to ensuring that key stakeholders such as the SBFC are involved in the boundary opening exercise. The ministry also committed to periodically inform the public about the boundary re-opening exercise through the media.

Despite the above commitments, the Ugandan public has not been informed of the results from the Bugoma forest boundary re-opening exercise that took place between November 2021 and August 2022.

CONCLUSION

In line with Article 41 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution therefore, **we are requesting the Ministry of Lands to avail the SBFC and the Ugandan public with a copy of the report from the Bugoma forest boundary re-opening exercise.** The ministry should work with the SBFC to organise a meeting for the Bugoma forest communities to enable presentation of the

report in a language the communities understand as part of accountability to host communities. The report will aid the SBFC and the Ugandan public to promote conservation of Bugoma forest.


Any further information relating to this matter should be channeled through the SBFC Chairperson, Mr. Dickens Kamugisha through dkamugisha@afiego.org or the SBFC Legal Advisor, Mr. Bashir Twesigye through bashirtwesi@gmail.com.

Thank you in advance for your continued co-operation.

OTHER SBFC SIGNATORIES

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Other defenders of Bugoma forest

20. World Voices Uganda (WVU)
21. Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA)
22. Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG)
23. Twimukye Womens Organisation -Bugoma
24. Graffen Organisation –Butimba
25. Youth Action for Environment -Kiryandongo
26. Center for Energy Governance
27. African Initiative on Food security and Environment
28. Kasese Citizens Coalition to Safeguard Biodiversity
29. Katwe Sanitation and Clean Energy Women’s Club
30. South Western Institute for Policy (SOWIPA)
31. Youth for Green Communities

Cc

- The President, Republic of Uganda
- The Speaker, Parliament of Uganda
- The Prime Minister of Uganda
- Minister of Water and Environment
- The Chairperson, Natural Resources Committee of Parliament
- The Executive Director, NFA
- The Executive Director, NEMA
- President, Uganda Law Society
- President, Institution of Surveyors of Uganda
- The Head of the European Union Delegation in Uganda